



**Regional Meeting for Global Compact  
Network Focal Points in Africa**

**Meeting Report**

Venue: Hilton Addis Ababa,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Date: 23-24 January 2008

## Wednesday, 23 January 2008

### Opening Session

Soren Petersen, as Head of GC Networks and on behalf of the Global Compact Office, welcomed the GC Network Focal Points to the Regional Meeting. After the initial opening remarks, Mr. Petersen invited Mr. Georg Kell to address the participants.

Georg Kell provided Network Focal Points with a strategic update on the Global Compact highlighting the main areas of focus for 2008. Among the issues highlighted by Mr. Kell was the call to all participants in a recent letter to stakeholders for increased engagement in Local Networks. In addition to outlining the various engagement opportunities for participants (such as Caring for Climate, CEO Water Mandate, PRI and PRME), Mr. Kell stressed the importance of the forthcoming ISO Social Responsibility guidance (ISO 26000) in providing widespread understanding and guidance on key social responsibility concepts, definitions and methods of evaluation. He encouraged Networks to engage in the "mirror" committees to provide on-the-ground context and perspectives on the development of ISO 26000. He thanked Network Focal Points for their participation in and support of the successful African Private Sector Forum and wished them well for the continuation of the Regional Meeting the following day.

## Thursday, 24 January 2008

9.00am – 12.00pm      Current status of Local Networks in Africa

Soren Petersen started the day with a presentation on the current status and growth of Global Compact participants and Networks, both globally and with a particular focus on the African region. The presentation also illustrated the increasing variety of activities Networks in Africa are undertaking in addition to partnerships, which have been the most common activity of Networks in the region.

Mr. Petersen then initiated a "tour-de-table" and Network representatives were asked to introduce themselves and to provide an update on the current status and activities of their Network. Most of what was detailed during this session is contained within the individual Annual Reports and Activity Plans for 2008 provided as background materials to the meeting. However, some additional comments and challenges were tabled:

- The Global Compact Office will share best practices of companies who from headquarters encourage their subsidiaries and partners to commit to the Global Compact and implement the principles. These examples should be showcased and highlighted to other participants.
- The lack of financial resources was held up as one of the main challenges facing Networks in the region.
- All participants agreed that corruption is a massive challenge for the region. "It is the economic HIV/AIDS of Africa".

12.00pm – 1.00pm      Lunch

1.00pm – 4.00pm      Key challenges and opportunities relating to network management

Soren Petersen introduced the presentation on the Communication on Progress (COP) stating that the COP process remains our most important means for balancing growth with quality engagement. Nessa Whelan made a brief presentation on the COP, highlighting the current rate of COP submissions by African participants and indicated the challenge facing the region in the near future

when it comes to ensuring that the companies in Africa remain active participants of the Global Compact. Examples of activities other Networks are undertaking in this area were illustrated. Networks were encouraged to regard the facilitation of the COP process as a means to add value to the activity of the Network for participating companies.

Among the comments made during the open discussion after the presentation were the following:

- A clearer articulation of the ramifications of failing to submit a COP should be communicated to participants in the region.
- A previous query made by a Focal Point to the GCO by email regarding the possibility of collective reporting by companies who do not have the resources or capacity to develop their own individual COPs was still awaiting a response. The GCO responded by saying that such a format for reporting was currently not possible.
- Resource constraints at the local level limit the capacity to train civil society and media to act as watchdogs or to build capacity for social vetting.
- Given the NGOs also write letters committing themselves to the GC and its principles, guidelines for COPs for NGO organizations should also be developed. They could be asked to describe how they have pushed the agenda or supported the principles in the past year. The GCO responded that such guidelines are currently under development, and encouraged Networks to contact Ms. Olajobi Makinwa, at [makinwa@un.org](mailto:makinwa@un.org) if they had further comments or questions.

During a broader discussion on resource-mobilization to support Networks a number of issues were raised:

- It is difficult to encourage companies to pay a fee to the Network when they were initially recruited to the Global Compact with the understanding that participation in the initiative was free of charge.
- It was agreed that in order to be able to charge fees, participants have to see a value in the Network and its activities. However, it was noted that recruitment itself is a resource-consuming activity which can in itself take away from the creation of this added-value.
- Donor funding is not sustainable and therefore not an ideal solution to Network sustainability.

#### Issue-area engagement opportunities

##### *Human Rights*

In the context of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Networks were reminded of the letter from UNHCHR and the Georg Kell to all GC participants calling on them to ramp up their implementation efforts in the area of Human Rights. Nessa Whelan gave a brief presentation providing Networks with an overview of the various tools and guidance materials available to participants. Networks were informed of the initiatives that have been created to coincide with the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, for example the Everyhumanhasrights initiative, and encouraged to undertake activities to promote human rights in 2008.

##### *Partnership Assessment Tool*

Cecilie Hultmann presented "Enhancing Partnership Value: A tool for assessing sustainability and impact". This innovative and easy-to-use interactive application enables both the UN and its corporate partners to assess the sustainability and development impact of partnerships. Essentially, the tool assesses the likelihood for partnership to produce significant impact through assessing preparedness, identifying opportunities for early adjustment, and positioning projects for successful

implementation. Networks were encouraged to make use of the tool, and distribute the tool to relevant partners on the ground.

#### *Caring for Climate*

The business leadership platform "Caring for Climate" was presented and participants were encouraged to take a copy of the 12-step tool developed by UNEP. The tool is aimed at supporting companies in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint. Networks were encouraged to promote use of it among their participants when implementing the GC environmental principles and the "Caring for Climate" initiative in particular.

#### 4.00pm – 6.00pm      Presentation on the results of the Monitoring and Evaluation study by GTZ

Ulli Klins presented the results of the impact assessment "The Global Compact's role in facilitating and fostering CSR policy and practice". The objective of the assessment was to guide policy and strategy of the Regional Learning Forum, Local Networks and the Global Compact Office. Some of the key recommendations coming out of the study were that Local Networks require more financial support and strategic advice and that engagement of government should be increased in order to create the necessary enabling environment.

#### Actions and Outcomes

1. The GCO committed to continue its work to develop an effective and comprehensive knowledge management system which will result in increased knowledge sharing and information exchange among the Networks
2. The Networks agreed to communicate regularly with each other by way of an email group.
3. The GCO committed to coordinate a stock-taking exercise to collect examples and case stories of anti-corruption activities by Networks in the region. This report would provide a background to a potential discussion with donors at the next ALNF
4. In collaboration with the Networks the GCO commits to develop a status report of Networks in Africa which could be used when approaching a broader group of potential donors.